

6-14-00

FACT SHEET

FINAL RULE REMOVING SURFACTANT ALCOHOL ETHOXYLATES FROM THE GLYCOL ETHERS CATEGORY OF AIR TOXICS

TODAY'S ACTION

- ! The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is issuing a final rule to revise the Clean Air Act's definition of glycol ethers to exclude surfactant alcohol ethoxylates and their derivatives. The revision exempts only the group of glycol ethers known as surfactant alcohol ethoxylates and their derivatives from potential regulation as toxic air pollutants.
- ! Air toxics, also known as hazardous air pollutants, are those pollutants known or suspected to cause cancer or other serious health problems in humans. Glycol ethers are a class of pollutants listed as air toxics; however, EPA has determined that airborne surfactant alcohol ethoxylates and their derivatives are not likely to cause human health or environmental problems.
- ! Surfactant alcohol ethoxylates and their derivatives are used by the detergent manufacturing industry as active ingredients in industrial and consumer products such as soaps, detergents, and other cleaning products.
- ! Today's action also removes these compounds from designation as hazardous substances under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA), also known as Superfund.

BACKGROUND

- ! Under the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990, EPA is required to regulate sources of 188 listed toxic air pollutants. For listed categories of "major" sources (those that emit more than 10 tons a year of a single listed pollutant or 25 tons year of a combination of pollutants), the law requires EPA to develop standards that require the application of stringent air pollution controls, known as maximum achievable control technology.
- ! When pollutant is listed as an air toxic under the Clean Air Act, it also is defined as a hazardous substance under Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act.

- ! The Clean Air Act allows EPA to revise the list of hazardous air pollutants. EPA agreed to consider excluding surfactant alcohol ethoxylates and their derivatives at the request of the Soap and Detergent Association, an industry group.
- ! EPA has reviewed data on the health and environmental effects of these compounds and found that they may not reasonably be anticipated to cause adverse health or environmental effects .

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- ! To read a copy of today's rule on the EPA's World Wide Web site, go to <http://www.epa.gov/ttn/oarpg/ramain.html>. For more information, call Dr. Roy L. Smith at EPA's Office of Air Quality Planning and Standards at (919) 541-5362 or e-mail him at smith.roy@epa.gov.